

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----071705Z 058315 /44

O R 071730Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0332
INFO USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 06627

EXDIS

PASS DEFENSE ALSO FOR DASD/ISA GLITMAN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: NATO, OCON, MILI, AWACS, FR
SUBJ: NATO AEW - POSSIBLE FRENCH PARTICIPATION

BEGIN SUMMARY: GOF HAS URGENT STUDY UNDER WAY RE
FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN AWACS CONTINGENT ON EQUIPPING
AWACS FLEET WITH GE/SNECMA CFM-56 ENGINE. STUDY IS
TO BE COMPLETED BY MARCH 15 AND REFERRED TO ELYSEE
FOR DECISION, PERHAPS IN TIME FOR MARCH 25 DEFENSE
MINISTERS' MEETING. END SUMMARY.

1. A WELL-PLACED MINISTRY OF DEFENSE SOURCE RAISED
AWACS WITH EMBOFF ON MARCH 3. HE SAID THAT GOF IS
GIVING SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO PARTICIPATION IN AWACS
PROGRAM. THE FOLLOWING FACTORS HAVE BEEN PRESENTED
IN INTERNAL GOF PAPER ON FRENCH PARTICIPATION:

A. AWACS IS NOT ONLY A DEFENSE AND FINANCIAL
DECISION FOR THE GOF, BUT A POLITICAL DECISION. THERE
CAN BE NO FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN PROCUREMENT OF AWACS
AIRCRAFT UNLESS THERE IS INDUSTRIAL PARTICIPATION, BY
FRENCH FIRMS WITH THE FINANCIAL, EMPLOYMENT, AND
POLITICAL BENEFITS WHICH WILL ENSUE THEREFROM.

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B. NATO CONSIDERATION OF AWACS HAS YET TO DEAL
WITH QUESTIONS WHICH ARE OF POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE TO
THE GOF. FOR EXAMPLE: WHERE WILL THE AIRCRAFT BE
BASED? UNDER WHAT FLAG WILL THE AIRCRAFT FLY (US,
COUNTRY OF BASING?). WILL THE AIRCRAFT BE OVERTLY
UNDER NATO'S INTEGRATED MILITARY COMMAND?

2. SOURCE WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE ANSWERS TO SUCH QUESTIONS WILL BE CRUCIAL IN ANY GOF PRESENTATION OF A DECISION TO JOIN AWACS TO THE FRENCH DOMESTIC POLITICAL AUDIENCE. SOURCE CONTINUED THAT ONE OPTION THAT FRENCH HAVE LOOKED AT WOULD BE FOR GOF TO PURCHASE THREE AWACS AIRCRAFT TO BE BASED IN FRANCE WHICH, WHILE NOMINALLY TOTALLY FRENCH AND INDEPENDENT, WOULD IN ACTUALITY BE COMPLETELY INTEGRATED INTO NATO-WIDE AWACS SYSTEM.

3. SOURCE NOTED THAT SNECMA IS PUSHING GOF VERY HARD TO PARTICIPATE. SNECMA, OF COURSE, SEES THE OBVIOUS FINANCIAL REWARDS FROM GOF PARTICIPATION, ASSUMING THAT OTHER ALLIES WOULD AGREE TO PROCUREMENT OF CFM-56 ENGINE FOR THE BOEING 707S. SOURCE CONTINUED THAT WHILE HE COULD NOT RULE OUT A SUDDEN HIGH-LEVEL GOF POLITICAL DECISION TO PARTICIPATE IN AWACS CONTINGENT ON A CFM-56 BUY, CONSENSUS OF FRENCH BUREAUCRACY WAS THAT ASSOCIATED QUESTIONS, AS NOTED PARA 1 ABOVE, MUST BE ANSWERED BEFORE FINAL GOF DECISION. SOURCE ANTICIPATED THAT THESE AND OTHER QUESTIONS COULD NOT BE SATISFACTORILY RESOLVED UNTIL AUGUST 1977.

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED DEFENSE.

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WHEN EMBOFF NOTED THE PRESSURE FOR AWACS DECISION THIS SPRING, SOURCE SAID THAT IF NATO IS NOT WILLING TO RESPOND TO FRENCH CONCERNS, THEN NATO CAN HAVE AWACS WITHOUT FRENCH PARTICIPATION.

4. FOLLOWING DAY MILITARY APPLICATIONS MARKETING MANAGER FOR SNECMA CALLED ON EMBOFF AND GAVE BASICALLY SIMILAR STORY WITH FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL DETAILS. SNECMA HAS BEEN PRESSURING GOF SINCE LAST SUMMER TO PROPOSE CFM-56/AWACS PACKAGE TO NATO. DEFENSE MINISTER BOURGES RESISTED ANY SUCH APPROACH. IT WAS NOT UNTIL SNECMA PRESIDENT APPROACHED PRESIDENT GISCARD AND OUTLINED ECONOMIC AND DOMESTIC POLITICAL BENEFITS OF CFM-56 LINK THAT ELYSEE ORDERED MOD TO COMMENCE A STUDY OF GOF PARTICIPATION IN AWACS. THAT STUDY IS TO BE COMPLETED AND PRESENTED TO DEFENSE MINISTER BOURGES ON MARCH 15. IT WILL THEN GO TO ELYSEE.

5. SNECMA IS ACUTELY AWARE OF TIME PRESSURE FOR GOF DECISION PRIOR TO MARCH 25 NATO DEFENSE MINISTERS' MEETING ON AWACS AND IS ATTEMPTING TO CONVINCE GOF OF THIS URGENCY. SNECMA REP SAID SEVERAL OPTIONS ARE CONTAINED IN MOD AWACS STUDY, BUT MOST LIKELY IS PURCHASE OF "FROM 2-4" AWACS AIRCRAFT TO BE BASED IN CONFIDENTIAL

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FRANCE, UNDER FRENCH CONTROL BUT INTEGRATED INTO NATO-WIDE SYSTEM.

6. RE FUNDING OF FRENCH PARTICIPATION, SNECMA REP SAID SEVERAL FORMULAE ARE UNDER STUDY AND THESE WILL HAVE TO BE WORKED OUT WITH NATO AUTHORITIES. IT MAY BE THAT A DECISION IN PRINCIPLE CAN BE TAKEN AT MARCH 25 MEETING WHICH WILL LEAVE DOOR OPEN FOR FURTHER DIALOGUE OVER EXACT COSTS OF FRENCH PARTICIPATION.
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